

## **UC Merced**

### **Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society**

#### **Title**

Radical Embodiment and the Relation Between Individual and Joint Action: A Level-Neutral Approach

#### **Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/53j1x4n2>

#### **Journal**

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 42(0)

#### **Author**

de Oliveira, Guilherme Sanches

#### **Publication Date**

2020

#### **Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

# **Radical Embodiment and the Relation Between Individual and Joint Action: A Level-Neutral Approach**

**Guilherme Sanches de Oliveira**

University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, United States

## **Abstract**

A common assumption in the philosophical literature on joint action is that individual-level action is both ontologically and explanatorily prior to collective action: in this view, joint action emerges from and is therefore best explained in terms of individual-level mental (intentional, propositional) states. This leads to the awkward position of attributing individual-like minds to groups. But assigning priority to the collective level is equally unsatisfactory. Here I draw from radical embodied cognitive science to offer a level-neutral alternative. Whether individual or joint, successful action is properly understood as the soft-assembly of a synergistic system, i.e., a higher-order control system exhibiting dimensional compression and reciprocal compensation. This level-neutral lens of synergistic dynamics helps elucidate the circular relation between individual and collective action: joint action recruits individual-level motor/cognitive mechanisms, yet individual-level mechanisms only emerge through development in social settings resulting in a nested, self-reinforcing coordinative structure for action, both individual and collective.